

## Forgiveness by OTTSTF

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**Summary:**

He was scared.

He understands now that keeping these kids apart was the exact opposite of what they'd needed.

He doesn't ask for forgiveness.

He simply asks for understanding.

## Forgiveness

### Author's Note:

Yep.

I'm still hopelessly in love with these two.

The gate's closed.

They're all safe. They're all alive. Will's back; he's getting some much needed sleep.

There's one last piece to this puzzle, and until they arrive, Mike feels as if there's a blade held against his throat, which will puncture him with the slightest of movements.

He waits on the porch of the Byers' home. Relief shoots through him when Will returns home alongside Mrs. Byers, Jonathan and Nancy. He gives his best friend a hug which he admits was probably tighter than what it should've been, but he couldn't help himself. His childhood friend returning, alive and safe; who could blame him.

Then the seemingly infinite wait for El and Hopper began.

He hopes that Hopper hasn't decided to take her back to where he'd been hiding her. He couldn't; not now. Right? Surely this man has the slightest of heart to not do that to them any more.

His hopes are answered, in the form of a distant engine rumbling towards them.

He jumps up. Immediately he's pacing on the porch, waiting for them to arrive. The sound of the engine gets closer, louder, until finally, the headlights of Hopper's vehicle breaks the darkness around him.

His first instinct is to run over to them, to help El out, to give her anything and everything she needs. But Hopper raises his hand from the driver seat. He shushes him, tells him via hand signals to stay put.

Instinct inside Mike screams; *why should I listen to him? He hid her for an entire year, almost. He has no right to give orders!* But he stays put nonetheless, catching on to the fact that El is likely sleeping.

Hopper climbs out of the driver seat after shutting the vehicle off. He shares an eye-lock with Mike for a brief moment, before he leans into rear of the truck, lifting a body out.

*El.*

All Mike can focus on is the way her hand hangs lifelessly towards the floor as Hopper carries her. Had Hopper not shushed him a few seconds prior, Mike would be screaming right now, thinking that she'd drained herself *too much* .

Instead he runs to their side, as fast as he humanly can, and immediately takes her hand in his. Rubbing it softly, looking up to her blank, although blood-caked face, which also hangs limply to the side.

Then he looks up to Hopper, and the man looks down to him. The emotion he sees in the man's face is the last he'd expected: sympathy. *Towards him. Why?*

"Come on." Hopper whispers, gesturing towards the house with a tilt of his head.

Wordlessly, Mike begins walking with the man towards the house, not letting the grip he holds on El's hand slide.

They head straight to Mrs. Byers' room. Mike immediately moves the covers out of the way so that Hopper can lower her gently onto the bed, then covering her up quickly, though gently. He can't help but notice how Hopper simply stands aside, not saying a word; just letting Mike linger for a moment to take in El's face, and to hold her hand for a moment longer. He eventually leaves the room temporarily, retrieving a damp cloth, before gently working at the blood and ruined make-up on her face. Mike can't help but watch as the face before him transforms from a fierce punk-style *badass* who'd just saved the world, to a soft, innocent girl, who he'd otherwise assume was the most harmless soul to walk this Earth.

Hopper seems to allow him a few more minutes to simply sit there, with El's hand in his, before he finally breaks the silence between them.

"Hey, Mike." he once again whispers, causing Mike's head to flick straight to him.

"Can we talk? Outside?"

Mike wonders what could possibly be so important for the man to want to talk to him outside, away from the others. They're all in Will's room anyway, not wanting to leave his side. Will himself, before falling victim to his tiredness, could see the anxiety in Mike's face, and so he'd told him he didn't mind if Mike wanted to wait outside for El; which Mike greatly appreciated. Moments like that remind him why Will is truly the best friend he has.

"Yeah." Mike quietly responds, letting El's hand gently slip from his and onto the bed. He follows the man back out to the porch, where he closes the door slowly. The man heads over to the swing, taking a seat, before patting the space beside him.

Mike follows the gesture, and gingerly sits beside the man. He waits with what patience he has remaining for the man to begin whatever he has to say.

What he doesn't expect, is the man's first words out here to be, "I'm sorry."

Mike looks to the man, as if trying to read his mind through his eyes. "What?" he eventually questions.

"I'm sorry, Michael." the man repeats.

"Wh...hat for?" Mike slowly polls.

"For everything." he says, before he loses himself into a ramble.

"I thought... I'd thought that keeping you and her apart was for the best. I thought it'd be best to let you both... grow apart, continue on. I *wanted* to let you see each-other eventually, but... I realise I never would've gotten there. I was thinking that keeping you apart was the best thing for you both, but now I know that I was wrong. I know now, you need each-other."

Mike can't help but just stare as the man lets himself go.

"I guess... she's like a second chance... for me, you know? I lost Sara,

and I thought I'd never recover. Then I took El in and it was like a breath of fresh air... I'd finally been given a second chance at it all, and I..."

He sighs, visibly struggling. "I didn't want to lose her, too. And, *I know*. I know that's selfish of me. You've gone an entire year, not knowing whether you'd lost her or not, and I've just... kept you away from each-other, and... that's why I'm sorry. Just... as long as you understand that I was trying to do what was best for her, okay? I was scared, and selfish. I realise now that I probably should've let you visit. I regret not letting you, Mike. Honestly, I do."

Mike finds himself speechless at the honesty of the man beside him. Of all the things he'd expected to be doing tonight, listening to the *Chief of Police* claim that he's *scared*, and *selfish*, definitely wasn't on the list.

"I'm not asking for your forgiveness. Just... as long as you don't think I did it just because I wanted to; that's all I want out of this."

Mike absently swallows, preparing himself to speak.

"Well..." he starts, turning his gaze to the man. "Whether you're asking for it or not, you've got it."

"Huh?"

"My forgiveness."

Hopper looks at him, genuinely confused. "You... forgive me. For keeping you both apart for an entire year?"

"I'm never going to like that you did; but, yeah, I understand. I mean... I probably would've done the same if I were you."

Hopper just blankly stares at the boy, unsure whether he's genuinely hearing these words, or if he's just lost his sanity.

"Especially because of..." he sighs. "Because of Sara. I understand that you just want what's best for El, and, *yeah*, you kept us apart, and I... god, I've been so *broken*, but... I guess I can put that behind me. I'll forget about it if she wants to, too."

The man's eyebrows may as well be aiming for the moon.

"Christ, kid. I... I wasn't expecting that."

"Hey, I'm not all anger and depression." Mike jokes. "I mean, I guess that *has* been me for this entire year, but... all that matters is that she's here, and she's safe."

Mike turns to the man then, shifting in his spot.

"You kept her safe, Chief." Mike says, before wrapping his arms around the man. "I should be thanking you, not punching you."

Hopper's caught off guard for a moment, but quickly comes to his senses, and places a hand on Mike's back.

"No hard feelings, kid. I've been an ass to you, you got your own back on me."

"I guess we're even." Mike decides.

"Yeah." Hopper laughs. "Sure."

With that, they release their holds on each-other.

"So... what's it been like? I mean, taking care of El. What've I missed?"

"Oh, man." Hopper's head rolls back in small laughter as he reflects on recent happenings.

"She's been great, honestly. You know, she's been adjusting to it, getting used to living a, *well*, normal enough life. It's been complicated, though. Especially when she'd get angry."

"Oh, god." Mike can only imagine.

"*Yeah*, let's just say our little place currently has no windows."

"Seriously?" Mike's eyebrows raise.

"Yeah... I was a bit of a dick, to be honest. She'd left the place to go see you, and I... well, like I said, I panicked. I said a bit too much,

and well, she lost her shit at me. Screamed every single window into pieces.”

Mike can't help but smirk at the mere idea of her busting every window around her just like that.

“Woah.”

“Yeah... lesson learned, I guess.”

“Hold on.” Mike suddenly realises what the man had said. “She came to see me?”

It's then that Hopper realises what he'd said.

“Oh, uh... *yeah*... a couple'a days ago. Went to your school, said she saw you but you never saw her.”

“Holy shit...” Mike connects the dots, finally knowing the truth behind Max's sudden slip on her skateboard. “I knew it!”

“Wh... how?” the man questions.

“She... saw me with Max.”

“The redhead?”

“Yeah, her. She was... *well*, she was trying to show off her skateboarding skills, and she suddenly slipped to the side. Said it was like a magnet, or something.”

“... El.”

“Yeah, El.”

Hopper then laughs, running the picture through his head. *Oh man. Jealousy already. Good luck, Wheeler.*

They remain there for a few more moments, before Hopper suddenly returns to his senses.

“Shit...” he slurs. “It's getting pretty late. Y'better get inside, get some sleep.”

“Yeah... yeah we kinda got caught up, there.” Wheeler agrees.

“Yeah. Listen, Mike.” Hopper grabs the boy’s hand, stopping him in his path. Mike turns to him.

“Be there for her? I don’t want her to wake up alone, and on the ride over, she was mumbling your name in her sleep, so... I’d prefer it if you were there for her as soon as she wakes up, y’know?”

Mike can’t help but let the largest smile grow onto his face. The thought that she, an awesome superhero who’d just saved the world for the second time, would want to see *him* when she wakes up...

“Yes, sir.” he nods his head.

“Good kid, Wheeler.” Hopper pats his shoulder.

“Good night, Chief.” Mike gives the man.

“Good night, kid.”

Mike delicately slides himself into bed beside El, ensuring he’s completely silent, producing absolutely no movement on her part. It doesn’t take him long to pass out, and, although he’d never tell anybody, this is the most comfortable sleep he’d had for a very long time.

The same goes for Hopper. Having finally gotten everything off his chest, now knowing that El will wake up to the person she’d been begging for the entire year; knowing she can finally be happy, puts him to sleep like a baby.

Most would think that these people would struggle to sleep, after such horrifying events. And yes, they’re going to have trouble for nights to come, but tonight, knowing that the gate is closed, the demons are locked away, and they can finally live life happy, as they should, helps them sleep peacefully this night.



El wakes up to a ceiling she doesn't recognise. She panics, spinning her head quickly to grasp her senses, when she immediately spots the face next to her.

She's startled at first; not expecting to wake up with Mike by her side, but she quickly shakes that off, and the smile that grows onto her face is large. The headache she has doesn't matter right now, as the person she'd been longing to see for so long is finally by her side, sleeping peacefully as a product of her hard work.

She wonders if Hopper knows of Mike being with her; she wonders what Hopper will do from now on, now that Mike finally knows she's around, alive and safe. She hopes, deep down, that he'll be willing to let them see each-other often from now on.

For now, however, she simply rolls onto her side, before finding one of Mike's hand to take in her own.

He's awakened by the sudden feeling against his hand. His eyes slip open, and he panics for a brief moment as memories of the day before flood his mind, but he's quickly brought back to reality by the sight of El, smiling beside him.

"El." he smiles through his sleep-filled face.

"Mike." she echoes his greeting.

His smile grows. He lets his eyes shut again, dropping his head back to the pillow as he takes his free hand, and connects it with hers. She copies his actions; loving the idea of more sleep, especially now she's aware that Mike is beside her.

Within a couple of seconds, they're both out cold once again.

### **Author's Note:**

As you may have noticed, I'm being practically

strangled by writer's block. As well as that, I *may* have suddenly become employed, which also hinders my ability to write.

Nonetheless, if you've got any ideas that you'd like me to write, please give me a shout and I'll see what I can do. <3

Thanks for reading! Please do drop feedback below. Go ahead and tell me how hopeless I am. <3